Coastal Silviculture Committee

2026 Summer Workshop
Lake Cowichan
Vancouver Island
June 17th- 18th, 2026

Silviculture Investments for Complex Goals

Acknowledgements and Introduction

The Coastal Silviculture Committee (CSC) wishes to thank the following Directors for contributing their time and efforts to organize the 2026 Summer Workshop:

Craig Wickland (President)	Jack Sweeten (Vice President)
Neil Hughes	Margaret Symon (Secretary)
Laura Gilbert	Don Pigott
Jocelin Teron	Paul Kutz
Kwadwo Omari	Daniel Oxland
Ritchard LaBoucane	Cole Schneider
Elske von Hardenberg	Cosmin Filipescu
Marissa Hallaway	Justin Lenze
MacKendrick Hallworth	

On behalf of the Coastal Silviculture Committee (CSC), the organizing committee would like to thank all the presenters for taking the time out of their very demanding schedules and lives to share their experience and knowledge with the rest of us.

“Silviculture Investments for Complex Goals”

Welcome to the CSC’s 2026 Summer Workshop! This field-based tour and much-anticipated networking opportunity will be hosted in the Lake Cowichan area on the traditional lands of the Cowichan Tribes, Halat, Lyackson, Ts’uubaa-asatx, Penelakut and Ditidaht First Nations.

Modern silviculture practices are shifting in this time of social, economic, and environmental complexity. On public lands there is more focus than ever on managing for multiple values beyond timber; however, the BC Government continues to set ambitious timber supply goals. How can coastal silviculture practices adapt to support the expectations placed on our forests? How do we align our silviculture investment to meet these expectations?

In this year’s CSC winter workshop, we will explore:

- Invasive species management
- Updates to coastal biogeoclimatic units in the new LMH 77
- Observations and learnings from Douglas-fir, Grand fir and Western red cedar trials
- Wildfire risk reduction through thinning, cultural burning and fuel treatments.
- Cascara and vine maple gene conservation

Day 1 June 17th Agenda

Time	Session	Speaker	Comments
11:00-12:00	**Saywell Park Lake Cowichan: Registration and workshop introduction** Be ready to leave on the bus by 12:00pm		All day parking available on Point Ideal Road
12:00-12:30	**Travel**		
12:30-1:30	**Site 1: Invasive Species Brushing** Use of manual brushing treatments for invasive species (holly). **Site 2: New coastal BEC LMH77** What has changed?	**Site 1: Jake Solway** (introduced by Cole) **Site 2: Heather Klassen and Sari Saunders** (introduced by Justin)	Split into 2 groups and alternate. 30 minutes at each site
1:30-1:45	**Coffee Break (provided)**		
1:45-2:00	**Travel**		
2:00-3:00	**Site 1: Douglas-fir Trials** Observations and learnings at Douglas-fir realized gain trials: How genetic gain interacts with planting density to affect volume and wood quality attribute. **Site 2: Grand fir Provenance Trails** Observations and learnings from grand fir provenance trial.	**Site 1: Jon Degner** (introduced by Dan) **Site 2: Charlie Cartwright** (introduced by Dan)	2 sites as single group.
3:00-3:30	**Travel to Mesachie Research Centre**		
3:30-4:00	**Wildfire risk reduction through thinning** History background, and learnings from treatments around Mesachie Research Centre**.**	**Devon Barnes** (introduced by Cole) **and Andrew Coster** (introduced by (Cole)	Single group
5:30-6:30	**Dinner and History of the Research Centre at Lake Cowichan Research Center (provided)** 7060 Forestry Rd, Mesachie Lake, BC	**Charlie Cartwright** (introduced by Dan)	

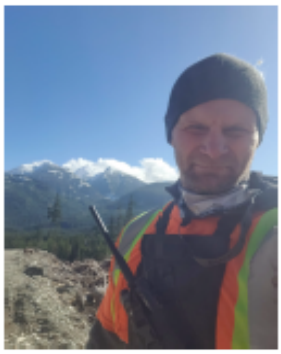
Day 2 June 18th Agenda

Time	Session	Speaker	Comments
8:00	**Meet at Saywell Park** Be ready to leave on the bus by 8:15am		All day parking available on Point Ideal Road.
8:15-8:45	**Travel**		
8:45-9:30	**In Situ Gene Conservation** Cascara and old growth vine maple (introduced or native?). Protecting unique sites and ecosystem features for learning and conservation purposes.	**Don Pigott** (introduced by Neil or Paul)	Single group
9:30-10:15	**Travel**		
10:15-10:45	**Coffee Break (provided)**		
10:45-12:00	**Skutz Falls** **Site 1:** Learnings from cedar planting density trials. **Site 2:** Learning from cedar terpene trials to reduce ungulate browse.	**Rose Schmidt** (introduced by Dan)	Single group. 30-min presentation, 45-min tour and Q&A
12:00-12:45	**Travel**		
12:45-1:45	**Lunch at Stoker Park - Marble Bay (provided)**		
1:45-3:15	**Wildfire risk reduction** A look at Fire Smart trials and first nations cultural burning. **Site 1:** Wildfire Fuel Treatment**.** **Site 2:** FireSmart Trail.	**Aaron Hamilton and Margaret Symon** (introduced by Margaret)	30-min talk and 60-min tour and Q&A
3:15-3:30	**Travel back to Saywell Park.**		

Presenter Biographies and Abstracts

Biography:

Name: Jake Solway
Affiliation: Integrity Industrial Services Ltd.
Position: President
Responsibilities: Involved in all aspects of operation
Academic training: No formal forestry training
Previous employment: I have been self-employed in my summer job for 30+ years.



Presentation Abstract:

Reduction of Brushing Treatments and Herbicide Use.

I have been asked to provide perspective as to how free growing objectives can be achieved in the absence of brushing treatments and herbicide use. This is in response to the significant reduction in brushing treatments across the province. It is worth noting that this is not true in all operations. Without getting into specifics, it is likely safe to say that this reduction in management is most prevalent on crown lands managed under various forms of tenure. The reason for the reduction is fairly simple. Money and the uncertainty surrounding the future of tenure in the province. The forest industry, like any other, is governed by short term fiscal responsibility. This is a flawed business model when it comes to the long-term management of forests across a massive landscape.

Some will offer other reasons for not brushing such as fire mitigation, biodiversity, maintenance of riparian values, etc. The list is long. While there is certainly validity and importance associated with these values, their maintenance and development are achieved through the development and implementation of robust brushing prescriptions, not their absence.

So how are these values maintained while achieving milestones such as free to grow? Again, a very broad topic that stretches far beyond the act of brushing itself. Innovative prescriptions are a piece, timely implementation is a piece, but the drafting of those prescriptions begins and is dependent upon management decisions made long in advance of the treatments, and long after.

In a social and economic climate where climate is at the forefront of many narratives and agendas. It is time to recognize the financial opportunities associated with advance silviculture techniques and systems. These opportunities are real. Removing the perceived cost of brushing and replacing it with financial opportunities that truly exist will create new revenue streams, increase yields and biodiversity, mitigate fire and respect the values of indigenous communities.

Notes:

Presenter Biography:

Name: Heather Klassen, MSc, PAg
Position: MOF Coast Area Research Ecologist
Responsibilities: Coast BEC, Climate Change Research
Academic training: MSc (UNBC)

Name: Sari Saunders, PhD RPBio
Position: MOF Coast Area Research Section Head
Responsibilities: strategic, scientific and admin support to Coast team; research ecology projects in forest structure and dynamics, disturbance ecology, impacts of resource management for ecological values
Academic training: MRM (SFU), PhD (MITech)

Presentation Abstract:

New Coastal BEC LMH 77: What's changed?

New biogeoclimatic ecosystem classification (BEC) is now available for the Mainland Coast and Vancouver Island in LMH 77, the Field Guide to Ecosystem Classification and Identification for Coastal BC (excluding Haida Gwaii). The new guide is the result of analysis of field data and information from resource management personnel over the last 20+ years. It replaces coastal unit descriptions in LMH28 and LMH26 and relative to older guides, LMH 77 provides more extensive written descriptions, additional visual representations of conditions under which different site units occur, keys to help the user with ecosystem identification and more comprehensive lists of environmental and vegetative characteristics. New mapping of these biogeoclimatic units is included in the updated provincial BEC layer (BEC13). This session will provide an overview of updates to coastal biogeoclimatic units and guidance from the Chief Forester on implementation of new BEC into operations, with time for questions and discussion.

Notes:

Presenter Biography:

Name: Jon Degner
Affiliation: BC Ministry of Forests
Position: Forest Genetics Team Lead
Responsibilities: Running genetics programs for Fdc/Ss, overseeing all genetics research on the coast
Academic training: BSc/PhD UBC
Previous employment: UBC

Presentation Abstract:

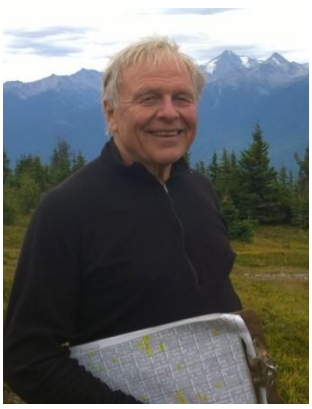
Douglas-fir Realized Gain Experiment

The Douglas-fir Realized Gain experiment is a set of five replicated trials designed to test many of the biggest assumptions we make in our genetics trials. In each trial, blocks with different levels of genetic gain for growth (B-class, GVO+10 and GVO+18) are planted at 625, 1189, 1890, and 3906 sph. The trials were planted in 1996 and just had mid-rotation measurements completed. We will walk through the trial and observe the effects of initial density on a 30-year-old stand, as well as the effects of genetic gain on the current and expected future stand condition and yield.

Notes:

Presenter Biography:

Name: Charlie Cartwright
Affiliation: Cowichan Lake research Station
Position: Licensed Science Officer
Responsibilities: Gene Conservation, Hemlock, True Firs
Academic training: BSc UBC, MS UCB
Previous employment: Forestry contracts



Presentation Abstract:

History of Cowichan Lake Research Station

The first days of what is now Cowichan Lake Research Station were in 1929 beginning with some construction of facilities and work on thinning plots. There was a linkage to silviculture research from the beginning. The station grew through federal and provincial programs initially with “relief” workers in the 1930s and conscientious objectors during World War II.

After the war federal and provincial forest research became the focus with the province’s forest Research Division taking over control in 1971. BC’s genetics program for Douglas-fir had been centred at the station from 1953. Work with western hemlock genetics followed in the late 1950s. Nursery facilities to provide stock were developed in the 1960s and a modern forest nursey established by 1979.

Today the station supports programs for genetic improvement with Douglas-fir, redcedar, western white pine, western hemlock and Sitka spruce having advanced generation testing. Genecology trials for true firs, alder, and bigleaf maple are in place. Conservation featuring non-commercial species such as western yew, Garry oak, arbutus and whitebark pine are represented by clone banks and seed storage reserves.

Notes:

Presenter Biography:

Name: Devon Barnes
Affiliation: Ministry of Forests
Position: Wildfire Risk Reduction Coordinator
Responsibilities: South Island Natural Resource District
Academic training: Masters in Science, RPF 5036
Previous employment: Capital Regional District

Presentation Abstract:

Crown Land Wildfire Risk Reduction (CLWRR) in the South Island Natural Resource District

Devon will be discussing wildfire risk reduction projects that have occurred in the South Island Natural Resource District. Since May 2023, Devon has been working for the Ministry of Forests administering wildfire risk reduction projects on crown land. Over the years, the program has grown in scope and scale through the thoughtful input from our partners and lesson learned. During the presentation, Devon will describe the wildfire risk reduction project planning and its associated thought process in the selection and implementation of new or current projects.

The Mesachie Research Station project was implemented by his predecessor when the CLWRR program was being run by auxiliary staff. Although this project is now considered complete, there were many lessons learned that helped shape our CLWRR program going forward. Devon will be discussing the CLWRR program evolution and how each project completed refined our program. Some key themes discussed will be fundamentals of forestry, fire behaviour and fire prevention.

Notes:

Presenter Biography and Abstract

Biography:

Name: Andrew Coster
Affiliation: BC Ministry of Forests
Position: Forest Research Technician/ BCWS South Island
Responsibilities: Fdc, Ss, Hardwood breeding programs design, build, maintain
Academic training: Uvic, Royal Roads
Previous employment: Logging, Industry Silviculture, Mining, Ministry, BCWS

Fuel Load Mitigation in Mature Coastal Stands

As the compounding effects of fire suppression and climate change create heavy fuel loading in interface areas the province has initiated work through BCWS and the Districts to identify, educate and sponsor communities to undertake work to reduce fire intensity and educate residents on proactive approaches to fuel mitigation in forest stands and rural properties.
In 2021 BCWS and District personnel established a project proposal to design a multi-phase treatment plan for the Cowichan Lake Research Station Mesachie Unit. This discussion will outline the plan, factors considered, implementation and Wildfire Risk Reduction Post-Treatment assessment.

Notes:

Presenter Biography:

Name: Don Pigott
Affiliation: Yellow Point Propagation Ltd
Position: Owner
Responsibilities: Tree Improvement consulting Cone and seed collection. Seed processing and sales. Silviculture.
Academic training: Selkirk College Forestry Program 1967-1969.
Previous employment: MacMillan Bloedel – Forest Research Division

Presentation Abstract:

Gene Conservation of Cascara and Vine Maple

Cascara
It was estimated that one time up to 90% of all the mature Cascara trees were killed by the stripping of bark for use in the production of laxative since the 1920's.
The first stop shows how it has come back, and the current status.

Vine Maple
There are only two know populations of Vine maple on Vancouver Island, both between Cowichan Lake and the San Juan River.
For decades there has been a debate about if these populations were introduced or native

Both of these species are a part of the Provincial Gene Conservation Program which recognizes 28 non-commercial tree species considered poorly represented in Parks, Ecological Reserves and Protected Areas in the province.
For the past 17 years seeds from many of these species have been collected from 3 or more population for e*x situ conservation, and stored at the Provincial Tree Seed Centre*

Notes:

Presenter Biography:

Name: Rose Schmidt
Affiliation: BC Ministry of Forests, Tree Improvement
Position: Western Red and Yellow Cedar Technician
Responsibilities: Managing and Maintaining Coastal Red and Yellow Cedar Trials
Academic training: Forestry Dipl. at Fleming College, ON
Previous employment: Tree Planting, Wildfire, Forestry Technician

Presentation Abstract:

Coastal Western Redcedar (Thuja Plicata) Breeding Program – Drought and Deer

Visiting 2 *western redcedar* trial sites to discuss the history of cedar breeding on BC's Coast, including provenance testing for rainfall, and monoterpene selection for deer browse resistance.

At the redcedar provenance trial near Skutz Falls, we will discuss the 35-year history of the coastal western redcedar breeding program. These 1996 provenance adaptability trials compare seed collected across cedar's precipitation range and then planted in a drier and moister sites in the CWH to assess seed source's effect on tree performance. Inspired from the assumption that cedar was a generalist species with little to no genetic diversity.

The second site is a redcedar monoterpene trial. Since the provenance trials of the 1990's, the coastal redcedar program has taken several lines of focus: volume, deer browse resistance and cedar leaf blight resistance. This location shows the extent to which breeding for terpene levels can affect deer browse. This deer browse trial was planted in 2008 and demonstrates lower levels of monoterpenes being less browsed than trees of higher levels, and how that effects stand quality through early vs delayed growth, and single vs multi-stemmed growth.

Presenter Biography:

Name: Aaron Hamilton
Affiliation: Ts'uubaa-asatx
Position: Operations Manager
Responsibilities: OM at Ts'uubaa-asatx since 2012
Academic training: BBA with a specialization in Management (VIU)
Previous employment: 20+ years working with FN communities, mainly in upper management roles

Presentation Abstract:

Ts'uubaa-asatx FireSmart Fuel Treatment and FireSmart Trail.

Since 2012, Aaron has served as the very progressive Operations Manager at Ts'uubaa-asatx. The Ts'uubaa-asatx is a self-determining, innovative, and prosperous nation. A distinct tribe (with roots to the Ditidaht group of tribes), today Ts'uubaa-asatx has approximately 30 people residing on its reserve. Aaron is a strong supporter of the FireSmart program. Thanks to the program, all the homes at the reserve were updated to be fire resilient, and over 7 ha of high-risk forest land surrounding the reserve were treated to create a fuel-reduced strategic buffer. An interpretative FireSmart trail that was added to the treatment area is popular with the Ts'uubaa-asatx daycare and local residents. In 2025 Aaron participated in a video production highlighting FireSmart initiatives at Ts'uubaa-asatx. In Aaron's words, "we desire a strong and healthy community, connected to our lands and culture."

Notes:

Presenter Biography:

Name: Margaret Symon
Affiliation: Strathcona Forestry Consulting
Position: Manager
Responsibilities: FN Wildfire Risk Reduction
Academic training: Forestry UBC
Role: Wildfire Mitigation Specialist (WMS)

Presentation Abstract:

Wildfire Risk Reduction: Jeanne S. Simpson Field Studies Resource Centre – Marble Bay

In 2024 the University of Victoria and Ts'uubaa-asatx Nation signed a five-year collaboration agreement outlining a framework for joint initiatives, including educational programs and community engagement activities. The agreement came about as the university considers future use of a 25-acre Lake Cowichan property generously donated to UVIC in 1967 by Jeanne S. Simpson. For nearly five decades, the Jeanne S. Simpson Field Studies Resource Centre has served as a base for field studies and resource management. In recent years the Centre has declined, prompting UVic to consider its future, while recognizing the deep cultural significance of the land to the Ts'uubaa-asatx people.

When neighbouring lands to the west of the UVic property were cleared for residential subdivision, the mature/old growth coniferous stands of Douglas-fir, cedar, and hemlock at the site incurred severe blowdown. Recently funding was made available to Ts'uubaa-asatx for fuel management at the UVic site. Assessment is underway for fuel treatment this fall.

Notes: